

NEWS RELEASE

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TWO PLEAD GUILTY TO METHAMPHETAMINE CONSPIRACY

Randy G. Massey, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, today announced that two codefendants in a large methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution conspiracy centered in Wayne and White Counties entered guilty pleas in United States District Court in Benton this week.

KEVIN L. GARRETT, age 40, of Fairfield, Illinois, and **STEWART W. POORE**, age 44, of Springerton, Illinois, were charged along with 29 other defendant by a Federal Grand Jury in July 2005 with conspiring to manufacture and distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine. GARRETT and POORE entered their guilty pleas on Thursday and Friday respectively.

GARRETT and POORE each face a minimum term of 20 years imprisonment and a maximum of life, a fine of up to \$8 million, and terms of supervised release of at least 10 years to follow their incarceration. Sentencings for both GARRETT and POORE were set for January 5, 2007. Both were already being held with bond and were returned to the custody of the United States Marshal pending their sentencings.

These guilty pleas resulted from a long term investigation into the manufacture of methamphetamine in Wayne and White counties. Thus far, that investigation, which began in 2003, has resulted in the federal indictment of 33 individuals in related cases who, in total, were responsible for the manufacture or attempted manufacture of the equivalent of over 400,000 grams of methamphetamine. In addition to the 33 defendants who have been indicted federally, over 20 additional defendants have been prosecuted in related cases in state court by the State's Attorneys in Wayne and White Counties.

Investigation into the case is being led by the Carmi office of the Southern Illinois Drug Task Force, with the assistance of the Illinois State Police, the Fairfield Police Department, the Carmi Police Department, the White County Sheriff's Department, the Joint Narcotics Unit of the Mt. Vernon Police Department and Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, the Wayne County State's Attorney's Office, the White County State's Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James M. Cutchin.